

Freedom of the Press

The constitution provides for freedoms of expression and the press, and the government generally respects these rights. In November 2013, Parliament approved a new Defamation Act, abolishing criminal libel and replacing both the 1961 Defamation Act and the 1851 Libel and Slander Act. In addition to reducing the time limit for filing a civil defamation suit from six years to two, the new legislation eliminated the distinction between libel and slander and established a single cause of legal action to be known as defamation. The law also introduced a provision that removes liability from media houses that innocently disseminate content from a reputable source.

A parliamentary committee submitted recommendations in 2011 to repeal the Official Secrets Act, which has served as an obstacle to the effective implementation of the 2002 Access to Information Act and the 2011 Protected Disclosures Act, which protects whistle-blowers. Nevertheless, no progress was made on the recommendations during 2013, and the Official Secrets Act remained on the books. In practice, journalists' attempts to access official information are often met with bureaucratic delays.

Journalists and media outlets face occasional threats from both state and nonstate actors, but there were no reports of attacks or physical harassment in 2013. Some reporters practice self-censorship and avoid covering sensitive topics.

Jamaica has two national daily newspapers and a daily afternoon tabloid. There are a number of other national and regional periodicals serving a variety of sectors and interests, as well as more than 20 radio stations, 3 terrestrial television stations, and over 40 cable networks with multiple channels. The majority of media outlets are privately owned and offer a range of news and commentary. The authorities impose no restrictions on the internet, which was accessed by 39 percent of the population in 2013.

2014 Scores

Press Status

Free

Press Freedom Score

(0 = best, 100 = worst)

17

Legal Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

3

Political Environment

(0 = best, 40 = worst)

8

Economic Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

6